

rence in the outskirts of jungle villages, but fertile crosses between foxes and dogs are comparatively rare.

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4. WILD BUFFALOES AND TAME

I refer to your quotation from Captain Baldwin's 'The Large and Small Game of Bengal', given in the Miscellaneous Notes of Volume 51 (1) at the conclusion of Mr. R. P. Noronha's account on the above subject.

I have had occasion during the last three years to make fairly extensive enquiries in this connection in and around the sanctuaries and forest areas of Assam, and in certain respects my findings disagree with those of Captain Baldwin. I found, for instance, that the Assamese and the Nepalese herdsmen of Assam have a very marked dislike for wild bulls associating with domestic herds for the following reasons:—

(a) As soon as a wild bull starts associating with a domestic herd he immediately kills the domestic bulls, which prevents the herd being kept up as explained in (b) below.

(b) As a result of wild bulls mating with domestic cows, approximately 90% of the calves are still-born. Why this is so I have been unable to ascertain and you may be in a position to throw more light on the subject, but I should like to quote J. W. Best who says in his 'Shikar Notes': 'Wild bulls frequently take over the mastery of a domestic herd, and although they mate with them, the calves are said to be still-born and the cows die at their birth'. Best was talking about wild buffalo in Madhya Pradesh and I found his remark equally true about Assam, although my enquiries did fail to corroborate that the cows also usually die.

(c) As stated by Captain Baldwin, such wild bulls often lose their fear of man and sometimes even become killers, not hesitating to attack on sight any human being who tries to approach the herd they have taken possession of. This feature, besides being fraught with grave danger for the herdsmen, makes it almost impossible for the domestic cows to be milked and picketed. A noteworthy point in this connection is that it is usually a young bull, driven out of a wild herd by a stronger bull, who begins to take an active interest in domestic cows, but occasionally one also comes across an old animal taking a similar but more casual interest after having been ousted from a wild herd by a strong 'up-and-coming' young bull.

In conclusion I should also like to state that I had opportunities to see a few mature cows who were the product of wild bulls mating

with domestic cows. These animals were invariably very conspicuous in their herds by virtue of their size, heavy build, exceptionally large horns and, on closer observation, very much bigger hooves.

Post Box 139,
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March 25, 1953.

SURENDR LALL

5. WILD BUFFALOES AND TAME

(With a photo)

With reference to the note on the above subject by R. P. Noronha, the quotation from Captain Baldwin and the interesting comment on these two by Surendr Lall [above], the following observations may be of interest. They are the result of some 16 years' study of this problem in those parts of Assam where herds of domestic buffaloes are grazed in close proximity to wild ones.

Firstly, I do not think it right to presume that the solitary wild bull buffalo which joins up with a herd of domestic ones has in all cases been driven out from the wild herd by a stronger bull. As in the case of elephants and gaur, the solitary bull buffalo may have left the wild herd of its own free will: the advantages to it of such



Wild bull buffalo with domestic cow near Kaziranga Wild Life Sanctuary, Assam

a course are obvious—a harem with little or no rivalry! I agree with Surendr Lall that the solitary wild bull buffalo mixing with domestic herds may be either an old or a middle-aged animal.